

essentially of holes or spaces which pass right through the wall of the throat.'

JAGDALPUR,

S. R. DAVER.

BASTAR STATE.

October 7, 1937.

VIII.—SOME BIRDS OBSERVED IN KUTCH AND KATHIAWAR.

From the ornithological point of view Kutch appears to be one of the least known of our Indian provinces, and Lester's *Birds of Kutch* is the only reference work to it that I can trace. A few notes jotted down during two short week-end visits (mid-June, 1936 and mid-August 1937) may be of interest.

At Bedi Bunder in Kathiawar, a curlew was seen on 12th June. Lester cites a local sailor to the effect that curlew breed on the islands in the Gulf. At Rozi Bunder (also on the Kathiawar side), curlew and whimbrel were both common on the 16th June. Again in mid-August this year, both species were plentiful in the mangrove swamps around Kundla. Judging from the arrival and departure of these birds round Bombay, however, my notes alone would not justify a belief in the breeding of these birds in India. Further information on this point would be interesting.

At the Hemisa Tank in the heart of Bhuj, I saw a solitary drake cotton teal (*Nettapus coromandelicus*) in full plumage.

This is apparently the first record of this bird in the State. Subsequent to this I learnt from Prince Fatehsinghji of Kutch (who is taking a keen interest in birds) that two more had been obtained at a recent shoot and their identity confirmed in Bombay.

I was also fortunate enough to meet during my short visit, a pair of those rare and elusive birds, the white-winged black tits (*Parus nuchalis*) on a scrub-covered hill-side. Unfortunately I had no occasion to add anything to our knowledge of this little-known bird.

Other birds seen, apparently rare in Kutch (vide Lester) were the two Jacanas (*Metopidius* and *Hydrophasianus*) both of which were common at the Hemisa Tank in June. The Crow-pheasant (*Centropus sinensis*), which Lester particularly notes as absent in Kutch, was seen at Jamnagar, just across the Creek.

ANDHERI, SALSETTE,

HUMAYUN ALI.

BOMBAY.

December 15, 1937.

IX.—DRUMMING OF WOODPECKERS.

Anyone who lives in or near the jungles of this continent is familiar with the peculiar rat-a-tat or drumming on dead trees, a performance so often heard but not so often seen. I have the good fortune to have a vocation which permits of a study of bird

life and situated where woodpeckers abound. After a number of years witnessing these performances I am still at a loss to account for the reason therefor.

A woodpecker will fly to a dead tree which is often used time and again for this purpose and after sitting still for a short while will peck rapidly with ever quickening strokes of its bill at the bole or branch of the tree selected. It will keep up for some time with regular intervals between each bout of drumming the while looking round as if expecting something to turn up in response, but I have never seen any other of the species attracted in this manner so it would not appear to be a mating call. In any case why should a bird with usually loud vocal call go to the trouble of wasting its energy, tapping against trees to attract the female? It seems to be a practice common to all types of woodpecker and even those allied species which cannot be called true woodpeckers such as the Piculets. The other day I was attracted to a dead Grevillea tree by a persistent br-r-r-r, br-r-r-r sound at regular intervals and saw up at the top a Nilgiri Speckled Piculet performing.

I give a list of the various woodpeckers I have observed drumming.

Southern Golden Backed Woodpecker, Malabar Golden Backed Three-toed, Malherbe's Golden Backed, Malabar Heart-spotted, Malabar Great Black Woodpeckers and the Nilgiri Speckled Piculet.

It would be interesting to hear through the medium of the *Journal* others' observations on this subject. I note that Whistler mentions that it apparently is an outlet for sexual emotion though he does not support it with any reasons why it should be.

NADUAR ESTATE,
VALPARAI P.O.,
SOUTH INDIA.

R. N. CHAMPION-JONES.

December 12, 1937.

[The vocal or instrumental music of birds though it has its origin in sex, cannot be interpreted as nothing more than an elaborate form of sex signalling. It may pass outside the immediate circle of sex relationship and become an outlet for such emotions as joy, fear, jealousy or even the expression of mere content. In an interesting article on the drumming of the Heart-Spotted Woodpecker (*Field*, November 20, 1937), Major A. Buxton, writing about the performance of the birds at the nest, says that little drumming took place while the birds were sitting, but when he first entered his hide to film the birds in the act of drumming, the hen, disturbed by the noise he made, hit the trunk of the tree a resounding bang and ran up it drumming for all she was worth. The writer says that for two or three days he could always make her drum by making noises in the hide or by getting some one to hang about near the nest, for it was simply 'a case of making her rather but not too annoyed'. But once the woodpecker became accustomed

to these disturbances, she ignored them and ceased to demonstrate. What part if any the drumming of the woodpecker plays in the inter-relationship of the sexes is not known. Both sexes apparently indulge in the habit—but Major Buxton's note indicates that drumming may be a reaction to emotion not directly connected with the sexual impulse. It is interesting also here to include a comment by Mr. Eric Parker on Major Buxton's note published in the same issue of the *Field*. The series of cine camera photographs which illustrate Buxton's article record probably for the first time the movements of the woodpecker's head when drumming—movements too quick to be caught by the eye, the head of the bird during the process becoming as blurred as a fast spinning top. The photos reveal a rotatory movement—the beak of the bird, first pointing half left, next points directly at the tree and then reverts to the half left. Major Buxton holds the commonly accepted view that the sound is produced by the rapid striking of the bird's beak against the wood and he observed that the sound varied according to the state of the wood, being much softer on dead wood than on live, and even varying in intensity on different parts of the trunk according to the state of decay. Mr. Parker holds that the drumming sound of the woodpecker is not produced by repercussion but that it is purely vocal and emanates from the bird's throat. He submits that it would be impossible, with so small an instrument as the Spotted Woodpecker's beak, to produce by hammering on any sort of wood the long and sonorous volume of sound which can be heard more than a quarter of a mile away.—Eds.]

X.—THE INDIAN LONG-TAILED NIGHTJAR
(*CAPRIMULGUS MACRORURUS ALBONOTUS* TICKELL).

The article on Nightjars contributed by Mr. E. H. N. Lowther to the *Journal*, Vol. xxxix, No. 3, is most interesting, made more so by the admirable photos accompanying it which illustrate the wonderful provision of Nature in self-protection.

The Indian Long-tailed Nightjar is quite common at Dehra Dun. During the hot weather it calls almost incessantly throughout the night. Deep and shady nullahs are features of this place, which are the resort of this bird. It so breeds in them.

About the 15th April 1919, I flushed a bird, in one of these, off a single egg. The nest was just a few leaves scraped together. I marked the spot most carefully, so as to make sure of finding it again. I returned to the spot on the 18th, and although I looked hard and carefully at the spot where I was certain the nest was, I could detect absolutely nothing, so I thought there was 'nothing doing'. I walked slowly towards this spot. When I had arrived there I stopped and with my stick I pointed to the place, practically between my feet, when up flew the bird, disclosing two beautifully fresh eggs. The point of my stick must almost have touched her before she moved. The protection afforded her by her colouration could not have been better.

LONDON,

October 22, 1937.

R. M. BETHAM, C.I.E.,

Brigadier-General.